



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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Department of Health Provides Update Regarding Influenza Vaccine

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health today released updated information about influenza vaccination efforts in the state.

According to information reported to the Department of Health, public and private health-care providers across the state have received about 85,000 doses of influenza vaccine. In addition, all North Dakota counties are reporting at least some vaccine, although many areas report limited supplies.

Local public health units and private health-care providers are working together to develop plans for vaccinating high-risk individuals in their areas. Many communities in the state did not receive enough vaccine to cover everyone in the high-risk groups; as a result, vaccination plans may vary across the state. Further information about influenza vaccine availability will be provided by local health-care providers.

“Many people are understandably concerned and frustrated about the vaccine shortfall this year,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “The Department of Health will continue to assess the state’s vaccine supply and to work with the state’s health-care community as they focus on vaccinating our most at-risk population.”

Because of the vaccine shortfall, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending that only people in the following high-risk groups receive a flu shot this year:

- All children age 6 to 23 months
- Adults age 65 and older
- People age 2 to 64 who have chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, kidney failure or HIV or who are receiving chemotherapy
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities

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- Children age 6 months to 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy
- Health-care workers involved in direct patient care
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months of age

The North Dakota Department of Health is urging healthy people to forgo a flu shot this year.

“Many healthy North Dakotans are stepping aside so that someone at high risk of complications can receive a flu shot,” Dwelle said. “I want to thank them for their willingness to help protect our state’s most vulnerable citizens this flu season.”

The Department of Health also provided the following updates on vaccination efforts:

- The CDC is working with Aventis Pasteur to identify providers that work with high-risk populations in need of vaccine, such as long-term care facilities, pediatric clinics and hospitals. In North Dakota, some providers that originally ordered vaccine from Chiron Corp. may receive some vaccine from Aventis within the next six to eight weeks. Aventis indicates it will contact providers to let them know if and when they will receive vaccine.
- Aventis Pasteur announced yesterday that they will manufacture an additional 2.6 million doses of vaccine that will be available in January.
- The North Dakota Department of Health has received about 2,100 doses for children age 6 to 23 months. A total of 10,000 doses for children in these age groups are expected to be shipped. If so, most North Dakota babies age 6 to 23 months should be reached with one dose of vaccine, which is expected to provide some protection against the flu. (Children who are being vaccinated for the first time normally are given two doses of influenza vaccine.)

The Department of Health also has received about 3,100 doses of vaccine for high-risk children age 2 to 18. This vaccine was purchased through the federal Vaccine for Children (VFC) Program. Under guidelines set by the federal government, the VFC Program targets vaccine for children who are uninsured or underinsured, who are enrolled in the Medicaid Program or who are American Indian. These doses will be used to vaccinate high-risk children in these groups.

This week, the Department of Health began distributing the vaccine for children to public and private health-care providers across the state.

- Influenza vaccine currently is being redistributed among local public health units across the state. In addition, hospitals are working with local public health units to address additional redistribution to areas with limited supplies for their high-risk populations.

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